



Climbing Management Plan

Rock-Based Recreation in Joshua Tree National Park

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Joshua Tree National Park is developing a climbing management plan, which also considers bouldering, highlining, and slacklining. This newsletter includes:

- an explanation of management actions being considered;
- why the National Park Service (NPS) believes they're needed; and
- the objectives of the plan.

This newsletter is being distributed to park neighbors, partners, and stakeholders to solicit comments related to the plan, so please send your thoughts, ideas, and concerns, either online or in the mail.

For additional information and online commenting, please visit the plan website at www.nps.gov/jotr/getinvolved/climbingplan.htm.

Comments can also be mailed to the following address:

Joshua Tree National Park
74485 National Park Drive
Twentynine Palms, CA 92277-3597

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

David Smith,
Superintendent



Why is a climbing management plan needed?

- The climbing management practices established in the 1995 General Management Plan and the 2000 Backcountry and Wilderness Management Plan are not sufficient to address current and future regulatory and resource management needs.
- Lack of formalized access routes to climbing and bouldering areas has negatively affected vegetation, cultural resources, and soil crusts.
- Current management practices are not consistent with new agency guidance on fixed anchors in wilderness. A transparent and repeatable process for evaluating the appropriateness of fixed anchor use in wilderness is needed.
- Current management practices have had mixed results in reducing impacts on natural, cultural, and wilderness resources.
- Traditionally associated Native American community values were not adequately incorporated into previous management plans.
- A change in management strategies would address the park's unique resource challenges, finding an appropriate balance between recreational use and the preservation of cultural and natural resources.
- A transparent and repeatable process for evaluating the appropriateness of recreational climbing or related activities within or near cultural sites would better inform management actions.
- Highlining and slacklining activities have not been evaluated for their appropriateness at the park.



What is the purpose of the plan?

The purpose of this plan is to guide the management of rock-based recreation activities for the protection of cultural resources, natural resources, and wilderness character, and to support the public's desire to enjoy the park through climbing and related activities. In particular, the plan would address impact issues associated with access trails to climbing and bouldering areas, climbing routes and bouldering problems, and the use of fixed anchors, consistent with laws, regulations, policy, and guidance.

Management Action Being Considered

The park would implement a new climbing management plan including bouldering, highlining, and slacklining, to better implement previously proposed actions and to reduce impacts on sensitive resources. The plan would also bring rock-based recreational activities into compliance with law and guidance while recognizing these activities as an important visitor use with a special history at the park. Key components of the plan are:

- Implement and enforce the use of a permitting system for installation, removal, and replacement of fixed anchors.
- Close and restore social trails in the vicinity of climbing and bouldering areas and formalize a limited number of access trails in these areas.
- Implement a series of treatment projects in climbing and bouldering areas to address issues related to access trails; fixed anchor installation, removal, and replacement; potential cultural resource impacts; and social trail rehabilitation.
- Implement surveys, mapping, and monitoring of sensitive resources in the climbing zone.
- Implement a decision-making process for managing potential impacts of rock-based recreation on cultural resources.

Objectives of the Plan

- Identify access routes for heavily used formations and ensure approaches to routes avoid sensitive cultural sites and natural resources.
- Ensure fixed anchors in wilderness meet the provisions of Section 4(C) of the Wilderness Act.
- Clarify the permitting process for installing, replacing, or removing fixed anchors.
- Clarify the roles and expectations of professional guides and special use permit holders, including a determination of necessity for their operation in wilderness.
- Establish a framework for resource protection closures.
- Improve incorporation of the values of traditionally associated Native American communities.

What would not change?

- The park is not considering prohibiting rock-based recreation in the park or in wilderness.
- The park is not considering limiting the number of people allowed to engage in rock-based recreation.
- The park is not considering changing the boundaries of the existing anchor-allowed zone.

